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Probable Soviet Courses of Action

Capabilities:

a. In conventional forces, the USSR has decisive superiority in Eurasia. This superiority is likely to be diminished, but not ended, in Western Europe by 1954; it is likely to continue in southeast Europe and in Asia.

b. In atomic capabilities, the US has decisive superiority. By 1954, their superiority may be diminished, but is not likely to be ended.

INTENTIONS: So long as the US retains decisive atomic superiority, the USSR is unlikely deliberately to precipitate general war with the US, unless the Kremlin estimates that delay will irretrievably tip the scales of power against the USSR. Further, so long as the US possesses decisive atomic superiority, the USSR is unlikely to take action which the Kremlin estimates will provoke atomic retaliation by the US. Therefore, in estimating probable Soviet courses of action in any area, it is necessary to strike a balance between:

a. The importance of the area for the USSR and the consequent risk of atomic retaliation which the Kremlin is likely to accept, and

b. The Kremlin estimate of the likelihood of atomic retaliation by the US.

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